Scientific and Technical Employee Development (STED) Conference Call
May 31, 2007

Committee members:

Name	Role/Affiliation
Steve Blanchard (not present)	WRD Senior Staff
Virginia de Lima	Center Director
Dorrie Gellenbeck	NWIS
Bob Hainly (Chair)	Data Chiefs
Bill Hazell	Hydrologic Technician
Leo House	NRP
Mike Nolan	OSW
Dave Pollock	OGW
Kurt Schultz (not present)	IT Specialists
John Trommer	Studies Section Chiefs
Alan Ward	OED
Franceska Wilde (not present)	OWQ

Meeting Introduction:
- Bob Hainly opened the teleconference and reviewed the agenda. No additions were suggested. Due to some people having to sign off early, Bob suggested that the discussion item concerning "Course Mechanics" be held first so that interested parties could participate. This change was agreed upon by the group.
- Bob announced that the note-taking for the meeting would continue to rotate among committee members. Dave Pollock will be the note taker for this conference call.

Comments on the minutes for the March 2007 meeting:
- No changes to the minutes were made. Bob will delay posting them on the STED web page for a short time to provide an opportunity for those not participating today to comment.

Review of the Action Items Log:
- Several updates were provided by team members.
- Updates as a result of actions during this call will be added and then Bob will send the updated version out to committee members via e-mail.

Comments on the STED Web Page:
- It appears that even though the web page is listed as "internal only", it is available to the public.
- Mike Nolan agreed to take the lead on managing the web page.
- Bob will continue to provide approved documents for posting on the web page.

Discussion Item – Course Mechanics – *Course Delivery and Presentation*
- Bob introduced this topic by defining course mechanics as the items involved in physically developing and presenting TEL courses (e.g. the narration style, a review process).
- Virginia has some concerns about the narration and presentation style for the developing QW Principles course. The current presentation of reading the bullets is disconcerting.
- Alan stated that this style was, in part, used to meet 508 compliance standards. He wondered if the committee was suggesting two versions—one for 508 standards and one that had a narrative that provided information to supplement the text on the screen.
  - **DECISION** – Committee will delay any action. Alan will take the committee's concerns back to OED.

Discussion Item – Course Mechanics – *Review of Course Material and Presentation*
- Bob introduced this topic by asking Alan to describe the current presentation review process used for TEL courses. Presentation review is based more on the style and effectiveness of a presentation rather than technical issues.
- Alan said that an informal review process is in place within OED. OED would be willing to provide STED committee members with an opportunity to review a "draft" TEL course.
- Mike mentioned that he personally was not interested in acquiring a reviewer status and that there is not currently a review process for the "standard" classes; instructors are given the freedom to develop their own presentations. Mike would offer ad-hoc assistance when needed.
- Dave felt that STED developing a review process at this point would be micro-managing and we should allow an iterative process to provide the committee with direction.
- Leo felt that more review of courses was appropriate—both from a technical viewpoint and to evaluate the course's ability to hit the target recipient. He volunteered NRP as a source for reviewers.
- Bill suggested that the required post-course evaluation was a good way to get feedback on course presentation. These data could be used to improve course presentations. Alan confirmed that these data are used in this manner.
- Bob suggested that, based on today's discussion, we could take this issue in three directions: 1) develop and recommend a formal review process, 2) volunteer the STED as a pool of reviewers available to OED, and 3) continue to allow the post-course evaluations to provide feedback.
  - **DECISION** – Committee will delay any action, let the existing review process develop, and address this issue again at a later time.
  - **ACTION ITEM** – Bob will contact Virginia to see if she is willing to provide further ad-hoc review assistance.

Discussion Item – Course Mechanics – *Course Use Statistics*
- Virginia's review of the course-use statistics provided by Alan at the November 2006 meeting has caused her to question the validity of some of the conclusions of the previous analysis.
- Further investigation indicated that many counts of course "hits" are really visits out of curiosity to the first few pages. The number of complete course reviews versus hits is quite different. Her conclusion is that the OED may be overstating the popularity of some TEL courses.
- Virginia suggested that OED check the evaluations to confirm her cursory review.
  - **ACTION ITEM** – Alan will review his previous evaluations to confirm the drop-off in course hits further in to the course pages.

Priority Action Item Status – TEL Course Tuition
- Bob introduced the topic by stating that we appear to be receiving conflicting advice from the course attendees and their immediate supervisors and cost center managers.
  - Course beneficiaries and supervisors are interested in seeing more TEL courses developed and are willing to provide some level of cost-center funding to support that effort (e.g. pay per view, annual assessment).
  - Cost center managers are looking at the request to provide funding to support TEL course development as another Bureau assessment and that the Bureau should support this effort without additional funding from the cost centers.
- Questions:
  - Does WRD Senior Staff want to support the TEL Program and course development long-term?
  - Will Senior Staff have enough funding to keep the Program viable over the next 3-5 years?
  - The technical staff in cost centers appear to be "hungry" for more web-based training. Are they willing to pay the assessment to fund further development of the Program?
- TEL courses require an additional layer of development beyond traditional training courses.
- Dave thinks Senior Staff must demonstrate to WRD that they support the Program by word and financially. Senior staff should offer start-up support and then consider the adoption of a fee or assessment when it is established and costs are mostly for Program maintenance.

- Virginia mentioned that Cost Centers pay for the Program indirectly anyway if Bob Hirsch holds back funding from his discretionary money.
  - **DECISION** – Prepare a draft tuition policy proposal to Senior Staff from STED that includes a request for funding needed to maintain a viable TEL Program and support a reasonable amount of annual course development.
  - **ACTION ITEM** – Alan will draft a TEL Program funding support proposal for STED review for delivery to Senior Staff that will include a Program outlook, an annual budget, and potential funding support options.
- If Senior Staff endorses the proposal and the training receivers are in favor of the development of the Program, then request assistance from Senior Staff on how to approach and win over Cost Center Directors.
  - **ACTION ITEM** – Bob will work with Steve to determine how and when to best present the proposal.

Priority Action Item Status – Recommendation to Senior Staff:
  - **ACTION ITEM** – Since Steve is not present on this call, Bob will request an update from him to share with the committee.

Priority Action Item Status – Course-Conversion Priorities:
- It appears that all course nominations have been received.
  - **ACTION ITEM** – Bob will compile a draft prioritized list for STED review.
  - **ACTION ITEM** – Following STED endorsement, Alan will deliver list to Tj for current progress and comment on prioritization and schedule.

DOI LEARN Issues
- Mike reported some issues to Alan to relay to OED concerning administration of the course he recently moved from a regional listing to DOI LEARN:
  - 1) It has been difficult to log on for some folks,
  - 2) There are issues with using a credit card for payment

Wrap-up
- Draft minutes of this meeting will be distributed for committee review.
- Bob will continue to update action item log and email to STED.

Next conference call is scheduled for Thursday, August 2, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm EDT.